

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic St. Mark's Episcopal Church

and/or common

2. Location

South side SR 2004 (Mount Holly-Huntersville Road), just east of its intersection
street & number with SR 2074 (Beatties Ford Road) not for publication

city, town X vicinity of Huntersville

state N. C. code 037 county Mecklenburg code 119

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina Mrs. Frank Pennigar, Senior Warden
ATTN.: Mrs. Letty J. Magdanz St. Mark's Episcopal Churchstreet & number Post Office Box 17025 Post Office Box 607
Huntersville, N. C. 28078

city, town Raleigh, N. C. 27619 vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mecklenbrug County Courthouse

street & number 720 East Fourth Street

city, town Charlotte state N. C. 28202

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. Mark's Episcopal is a well preserved example of a small rural "English country Gothic" style church. It was built of handmade red brick by local craftsmen in 1886-1887. Today, sited atop a tree covered hill with its adjoining parsonage and graveyard, near an old country crossroads, it looks much as it must have at the turn of the century.

The Gothic style has long been associated with the Episcopal Church in America. Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire, who oversaw the creation of St. Mark's, had a strong interest in church architecture and in his later years wrote an essay touching on the development of the Gothic in the United States ("St. Peter's Church, Charlotte, Historical Addresses," 1921):

Church architecture in America . . . took its rise in the study of the Gothic architecture of our mother Church of England . . . The pointed arch, the long nave, the sharp roof with its open-timber construction . . . --these and other characteristics of the Gothic style have come to be commonly understood as denoting a building intended for ecclesiastical purposes; and almost all denominations making any attempts at churchly effect in their buildings have followed our lead

According to Cheshire the style had been introduced by a Bishop Hopkins, who built the 1825 Trinity Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the first "purely Gothic" chapel in the United States, based on an English pattern book. In 1836 Hopkins had published his own "Essay on Gothic Architecture . . . designed chiefly for Clergy." It contained lithographed church plans and details by Hopkins, as well as illustrations of notable English churches. Cheshire owned a copy of Hopkins' book.

With the long Episcopal tradition of Gothic design, and with Gothic enthusiast Cheshire in charge of fund raising, it is not surprising that St. Mark's is a good example of the style. It has a cross-shaped plan with a three-bay-long nave, a pair of small single-bay side wings, and a one-bay chancel. Roofs are characteristically steep pitched, flaring outward at the eaves. Old photos show that the roofs were covered with wood shingles. Today's roof is of similar appearing grey composition shingles.

Each bay has a simple eight-pane lancet window, with no tracery, set in a Gothic pointed arch opening. Many of the panes still have original handblown glass. Behind the altar is a large three-part window with tracery and a compound arch. Stained glass was added in the chancel windows in the 1960s, and some panes bear the names of their contributors.

The church has three entrances, the main one at the end of the nave and smaller doors in the two wings. Each is set deep into a pointed arch opening. They are heavy double doors built up of wood and have elaborate cast metal hinges. In the 1960s each pair of doors was nailed together and rehinged to form a single panel.

The walls of the church are of handsome red brick handmade at the site by John Ellis McAuley. One of the molds used to make the bricks still exists, a wooden form that held two bricks at once. The brick bond of the walls alternates a row of headers with five rows of stretchers. Single pilasters delineate each bay and empha-

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size the corners of the structure. A water table steps out from the main walls at the base of the building. The brick flue stack nestled next to the southwest wing was added after the structure was built.

. The interior of the nave is dominated by the chamfered-beam open truss that supports the roof. Walls are of smooth white plaster with wooden tongue-and-groove wainscoting. The space accommodates a dozen rows of pews on each side of a center aisle.

Where the side wings join the nave there is a hint of the Victorian decoration popular for residences in the period. Simple wooden columns are topped by scroll-sawn brackets and arch-shaped trim. The work is somewhat similar to the porch trim of the nearby parsonage built by John Ellis McAuley in the late 1890s, and it may be that he is responsible for this decoration in the church. Today one side wing contains additional pews, while the other is partially closed off to hold storage cabinets and a sink.

The chancel is raised slightly above the main floor of the church. Its elaborate wooden rood screen and some other woodwork were removed in an unfortunate 1950s modernization. The walnut communion rail and credence tables were put back in 1980 along with the old Bishop's chair, supplemented by a new pulpit and prayer desks by local craftsman Banks Blythe. The work was directed by parishioner Frank Penneger, who also stripped white paint from all the interior wainscoting and woodwork, and painted the church's exterior trim a subdued Victorian red, as suggested by early photos.

The setting of St. Mark's is an important part of its architectural appeal. The chapel sits on a wooded knoll above the Mount Holly-Huntersville Road, near its intersection with Beatties Ford Road. Both of these two-lane roads have been important highways through the rolling farmland of north Mecklenburg County since the early nineteenth century. Stepping down one slope of the hill below the church is the graveyard, its white stones marked with the names of the founding families of this rural community. The chapel is not oriented to the points of the compass. Its nave entrance faces northwest.

Behind the church is John McAuley's wood-frame parsonage. Its two-story L-shaped form and its Victorian doorway and porch trim are similar to a half dozen other farmhouses McAuley built in north Mecklenburg County, according to Mary Ellen Droppers, wife of St. Mark's current pastor. At one time the Mount Holly-Huntersville Road ran over the hill between the church and the parsonage, rather than at the foot of the hill in front of the church as it does today. Traces of the old roadbed can still be seen at the edges of the property. The rough wooden building that served as St. Mark's school was located northeast of the church along this road before it was demolished. Today a one story brick fellowship hall erected in the mid 1950s blocks the old roadbed just southwest of the church.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1886-1887 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. Mark's Episcopal Church, a handsome Gothic Revival style brick church erected in 1886-1887 by its newly organized congregation, is both an architectural and a cultural landmark in the predominantly Presbyterian community surrounding Hopewell Church in northern Mecklenburg County. The organization of the congregation and the erection of this church reflect the work and interest of a local farmer, Columbus W. McCoy, the Rev. Edwin A. Osborne, and the Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr. McCoy, who became discontent in the early 1880s with the Presbyterian doctrine practiced at Hopewell Church, made the acquaintance of Rev. Osborne who had left Hopewell Church to study for the Episcopal ministry. The Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire was then rector of St. Peter's Church, Charlotte. At the urging of McCoy, Rev. Cheshire held his first service in the Long Creek community preaching at Beech Cliff School House on 18 November 1883. The attendance grew at subsequent services which were held with increasing frequency and with preaching by both Rev. Osborne and Rev. Cheshire. On 17 August 1884 a petition was drawn up seeking recognition as a congregation. The church was officially recognized as a mission by Bishop Theodore B. Lyman (1854-1893) on 25 October 1884. The Rev. Edwin Augustus Osborne (1837-1926), the son of Dr. Ephraim Brevard Osborne and a member of several of Mecklenburg's oldest and most prominent families was appointed priest in charge of the mission and served in that capacity--except for brief periods elsewhere--until 1910. Land for the present church was acquired in February 1885 and bricks were made at the foot of the hill by a local carpenter, John Ellis McAuley. After some adversity the church was (mostly) completed and the first service held on 27 March 1887. The interior finish was completed in 1890-1891. The Church was consecrated on 10 May 1896 and continues to serve its small but devoted congregation. The church possesses an added significance as an expression of the architectural interest of the Rev. Cheshire (1850-1932) who would later as Bishop of North Carolina (1893-1932) influence the design of church buildings through his learning and writing.

Criteria Assessment

- B. St. Mark's Episcopal Church is associated with the lives of Columbus W. McCoy (1834-____), a local farmer who supported its organization, the Rev. Edwin Augustus Osborne (1837-1926) who served as priest-in-charge from 1885 until 1910, and the Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr. (1850-1932) the pastor at St. Peter's Church, Charlotte and later Bishop of North Carolina. The appearance and design of St. Mark's reflects the lay architectural knowledge of Rev. Cheshire who as Bishop would take a great interest in the design of Episcopal churches erected and enlarged under his care.

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- C. St. Mark's embodies the distinctive characteristics of vernacular nineteenth century Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture and in its high degree of structural and site integrity serves as a reminder of the rural church in now heavily developed Mecklenburg County. The interior appointments and the parsonage reflect the work of a local carpenter, John Ellis McAuley (1861-1929).

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The Long Creek community, just to the north of Charlotte, is rich in rural history, much of which has remained unstudied and neglected until recently, with the exception of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church. Sitting prominently on the hill overlooking its approaches from the Mount Holly-Huntersville Road, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, through both its buildings and its members, has been an important part of the life of the community.

The church began as a result of the interest of a Long Creek farmer, Columbus W. McCoy (1834-?), who had become discontent with the Presbyterian teaching of Hopewell Church. An acquaintance, the Reverend Edwin A. Osborne, had captured McCoy's interest by leaving Hopewell and studying for the Episcopal ministry and by subsequently loaning him a Prayer Book and some other material to study. McCoy had also attended some services at St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Through a friend, Colonel Hamilton C. Jones, a Charlotte attorney, McCoy was introduced to the rector of St. Peter's, the Reverend Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr. in early 1883. After attending services in Charlotte during the year, McCoy extended an invitation to Reverend Cheshire (later bishop of the North Carolina Diocese) to preach to a gathering in Long Creek.

On November 18, 1883, after holding his regular Sunday services at St. Peter's, the Charlotte rector was driven to the country where he preached to a good-sized gathering at the Beech Cliff School House. Impressed by the size and attentiveness of those assembled, Reverend Cheshire preached again the following evening and stayed at Columbus McCoy's home for a few days to become acquainted with some of his neighbors. Over the next ten months Cheshire made periodic visits to the Long Creek community to preach to a crowd that grew larger with each sermon. A visit on June 29, 1884, prompted Reverend Cheshire to propose to a number of interested participants, including Columbus and Albert McCoy, Robert Kerns, James Kirksey, Robert D. Whitley, John Blythe, Captain Thomas Gluyas and others, that they consider joining the church and organizing a Protestant Episcopal congregation.

The Reverend Joseph Blount Cheshire, assisted by the Reverend George Wetmore and the Reverend Edwin Osborne, went to Long Creek on Tuesday, August 11, with the intention of holding services through Friday. There they were met an hour before the services by a number of people who strongly urged them to stay through Sunday, which Cheshire and Osborne agreed to do while Wetmore returned to look after St. Peter's in Charlotte. Services were attended by large crowds, at times too numerous for the one-room schoolhouse which housed them, and the gathering seemed particularly moved by the earnest and straightforward preaching style of Reverend Osborne.

At the high point of this eventful series on Sunday, a meeting was held of those interested in forming a congregation, and the following petition to the Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina was drawn up:

We, whose names are here underwritten, desire to be organized into a congregation of St. Mark's Chapel; and we do hereby agree to be governed by the Constitution and Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States

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of America, and of the Diocese of North Carolina. Done at Beech Cliff School House, Long Creek Township, Mecklenburg County, N. C., August 17th, 1884, being the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.³

The following October 24th, Bishop Theodore B. Lyman came from Raleigh, preached the sermon, confirmed sixteen communicants into the church (making nineteen in all), and received another petition from the congregation. The next day, Bishop Lyman issued their founding document which read in part:

Now therefore be it known to the Faithful in Christ Jesus that I have organized and by these presents, do organize, a Mission as desired, the same to be known as St. Mark's Mission, and I do further appoint the following persons as officers of the same, to wit: John N. Blythe—Warden, and Thomas Gluyas—Treasurer.

Columbus W. McCoy was commissioned to be the lay leader of the congregation. The name St. Mark's was suggested by Reverend Cheshire and Reverend Osborne because of the Biblical companionship of St. Mark and St. Peter,⁴ which was symbolized by a similar association between the two Mecklenburg churches.

Also at the October 24th meeting, it was requested informally that the bishop consider appointing the Reverend Edwin A. Osborne to be in charge of the mission, and \$300 was promised toward his support for the first year. Everyone involved subsequently agreed to this arrangement, and Reverend Osborne took over from Reverend Cheshire on January 1, 1885. Edwin Augustus Osborne (1837-1926) was the son of Dr. Ephraim Brevard Osborne. he had entered the Civil War as the captain of an Iredell County company and eventually rose to the rank of colonel. At war's end in 1865, he married Fannie Swan Moore, a descendant of the prominent Moore family of New Hanover and Brunswick counties. He entered the legal profession but abandoned it some years later to engage in religious service. After ordination as a deacon in 1877, he began his ministry at a small salary in Fletcher, North Carolina. Reverend Osborne served at St. Mark's with only brief interruptions from 1885 to 1910. He established the Thompson Orphanage and Training Institution in 1887 of which he was superintendent for ten years.⁵

In February, 1885, just under four months after the mission was started, two church members, Robert Whitley and Benjamin Houston, sold a total of two and one-quarter acres of choice hilltop land for a modest sum to the church trustees.⁶ The members of the new church wanted to build their own house of worship. The drive to raise money went on in 1885 and 1886, but the early church minutes show that the effort received a major setback in the middle of 1886 because of severe rains which almost totally destroyed the crops in the area. Reverend Cheshire had been working at St. Peter's in Charlotte to help raise funds, and went to a general convention in Chicago with the understanding that the work would get under way in a week or ten days. While there, he received a letter from R. D. Whitley explaining that Reverend Osborne was disappointed with the level of funds received and wanted to postpone construction until the spring, which Whitley thought would be disastrous for the momentum thus far achieved. Cheshire immediately wired

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Whitley to proceed thus: "Go ahead, and I will be responsible." Reverend Osborne questioned the intent of the letter, but Whitley assured him it meant what it said and so the plans went forward.

On October 21, 1886, a contract was given to J. F. Grady to construct the church for \$770. The contractor, Joseph Free Grady, Sr. (1851-1929) was a local resident who moved to Charlotte two years later and became a prominent builder there. Among other projects, he built some of the first houses in Dilworth for the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company and also built a number of fine homes in the city and neighboring counties.

The church contract called for all of the material to be furnished by a committee of the church, except the door and window frames, doors, sash, putty, glass and lights.¹⁰ All the bricks were made at the bottom of the hill at the creek branch by John Ellis McAuley (1861-1929), a "country carpenter" who built a number of frame houses in the area as well as the old church rectory about 1897-1898.¹¹ Starting out with clay from the creek bank which was shaped in wooden molds (one of which is still extant), McAuley fired the brick in a kiln on the hillside above the creek. In addition to severe rains, 1886 was also the year of the Charleston earthquake which destroyed McAuley's kiln and a number of his bricks, but with Reverend Cheshire's backing, he constructed a crude kiln of old steam boiler encased in brick, which he used without a steam pressure gauge, and proceed to finish the job of making all the handsome brick for the church.¹²

The cornerstone, carved by W. D. Price, a parishioner, was laid on October 28 and contains a copy of the Bible, the Prayer Book, copies of the "Churchman," "Living Church," and "Church Messenger," as well as a short history of the mission to that time, and included the names of the active church members.¹³ On March 27, 1887, the first service was held in the new brick church. On that date Reverend Osborne wrote,

. . . (the church) has been erected by the earnest efforts of the members, assisted by means furnished by friends of the cause in Charlotte and other parts of the state, and some who lived in the North. The latter contributions were made through Bishop Lyman.¹⁴

In July 1887, Colonel Hamilton C. Jones gave the country church an altar, and about January, 1891, the structure was plastered, wainscoted, oiled, and painted, and a rood screen (no longer extant), was built. The first class was confirmed by Bishop Cheshire at St. Mark's December 7, 1893, and in 1895 and 1896, the chancel rail was put up, and the prayer desk, credence table (shelf) and Rector's (or Bishop's) chair were purchased. Consecration of the church building took place on May 10, 1896, after all indebtedness was absolved.¹⁵

Through the years since its beginning, St. Mark's has remained a small rural parish, serving mostly descendants of the original families. It was removed from mission status about 1960. It has, however, remained a significant part of the Long Creek community. As mentioned earlier, a two-story frame rectory was built about 1897 and 1898 by John Ellis McAuley on land donated by the Whitneys and Justice Heriot Clarkson and his wife, Mary Osborne Clarkson.¹⁶ In 1954, a church classroom and activities building was added

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to the site near the church. More recently (1980), the church itself was restored to much of its original state through efforts led by Frank Penninger, and the interior furniture was restored by Banks Blythe.¹⁷

St. Mark's was the focal point of a flourishing late nineteenth-century rural community. The charming "country gothic" church sat high on the hill overlooking the sand-clay road from Mount Holly to Huntersville; nearby was the rectory (which was also used as a meeting hall by the Masons) and the miller's house.¹⁸ Southward down at Long Creek was the mill, powered by water in the long millrace, and across the creek was the country store. The elegance and simplicity of the structure and its setting link modern times to the life style of a century ago, when such communities dominated the landscape of North Carolina.

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- 1 "History of St. Mark's Mission, Mecklenburg County, N.C., from 1883-1885," by Jos. Blount Cheshire, Jr. Unpublished historical sketch in church records, pp. 1-2.
- 2 "History," pp. 2-3.
- 3 "History", pp. 3-4.
- 4 "History", p. 5.
- 5 "History," p. 5; "Address of Justice Heriot Clarkson, Unveiling at St. Mark's Church, Memorial Tablet of Rt. Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr., and Rev. Edwin Augustus Osborne, Sunday, November 26th, 1933." Typewritten copy of address, pp. 2-4.
- 6 Deed book 42, p. 271; Deed book 42, p. 272; 16 Feb. 1885.
- 7 Typewritten copy of St. Mark's Church minutes, p. 9.
- 8 Jos. Blount Cheshire, St. Mark's Church: Its Beginnings, 1884-1886 (N. P., August, 1927), pp. 23-4.
- 9 Charlotte Observer, October 12, 1929, p. 4.
- 10 See note 9.
- 11 Charles W. Sommerville, The History of Hopewell Presbyterian Church, (Charlotte: Hopewell Presbyterian Church, 1939), pp. 156-9; interview with the Droppers.
- 12 Sommerville, p. 159.
- 13 Typewritten copy of church minutes, p. 9.
- 14 Lucy Gluyas, "The Beginning of St. Mark's Church", unpublished sketch from church minutes, p. 3.
- 15 Gluyas, "Beginning," p. 3.
- 16 Deed Book 116, p. 134, 14 December 1896.
- 17 Interview with the Droppers, Mecklenburg Gazette, October 9, 1980.
- 18 Deed Book 127, p. 41, 16 April 1898.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 8.68 acres

See attached Mecklenburg County Tax Map

Quadrangle name Mountain Island Lake

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	7
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5	1	0	8	2	0
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3	9	1	1	4	1	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached Mecklenburg County Tax Map, Book 25, Page 16, Tax Parcel Number 025-161-03.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Architectural description by Thomas Hanchett; statement of significance and criteria name/title assessment by Davyd Foard Hood; historical research by William H. Huffman.

organization Division of Archives and History date July 14, 1983

street & number 109 East Jones Street telephone 919 733-6545

city or town Raleigh, N. C. 27611 state

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

William S. Ruff

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 14, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

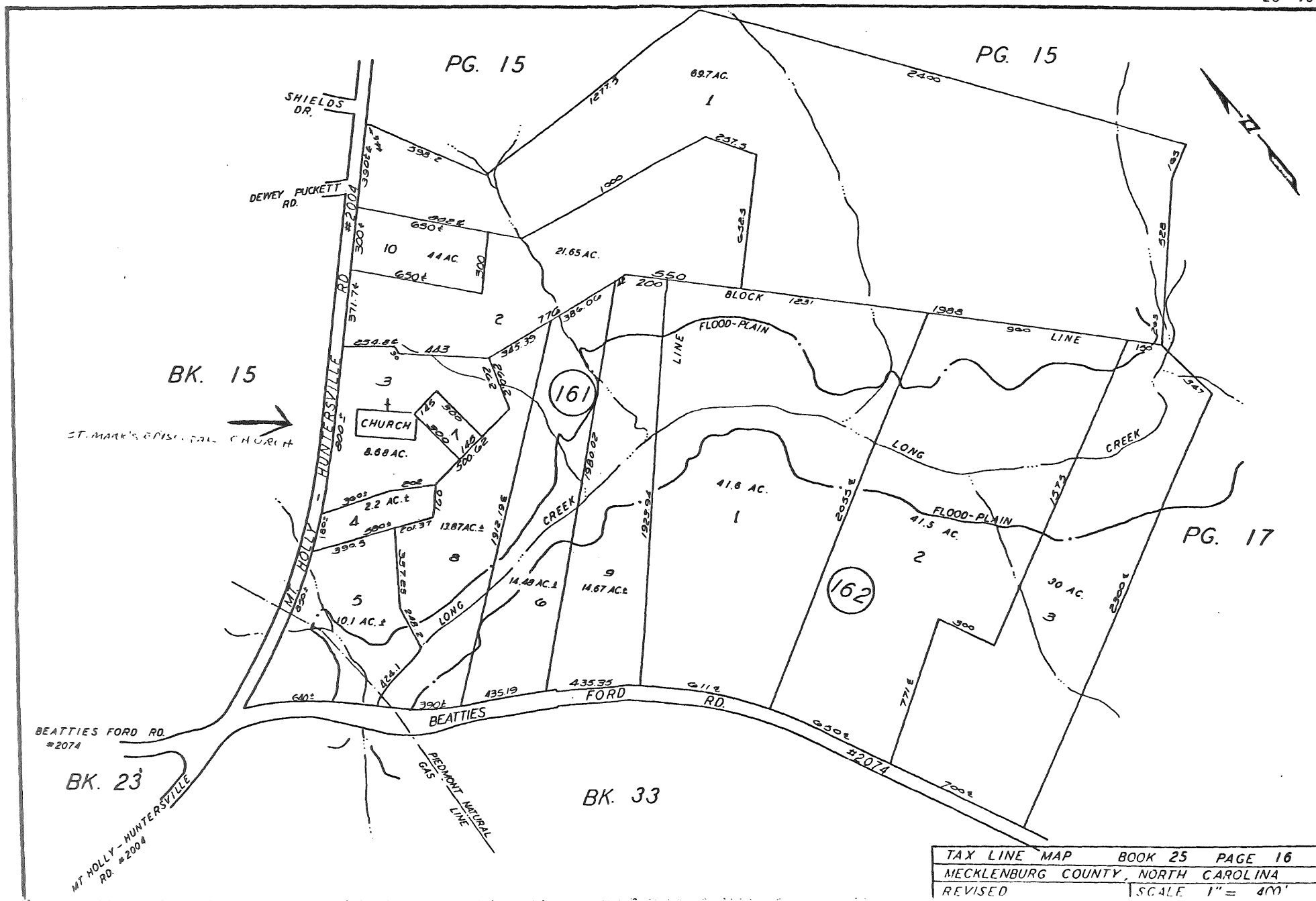
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

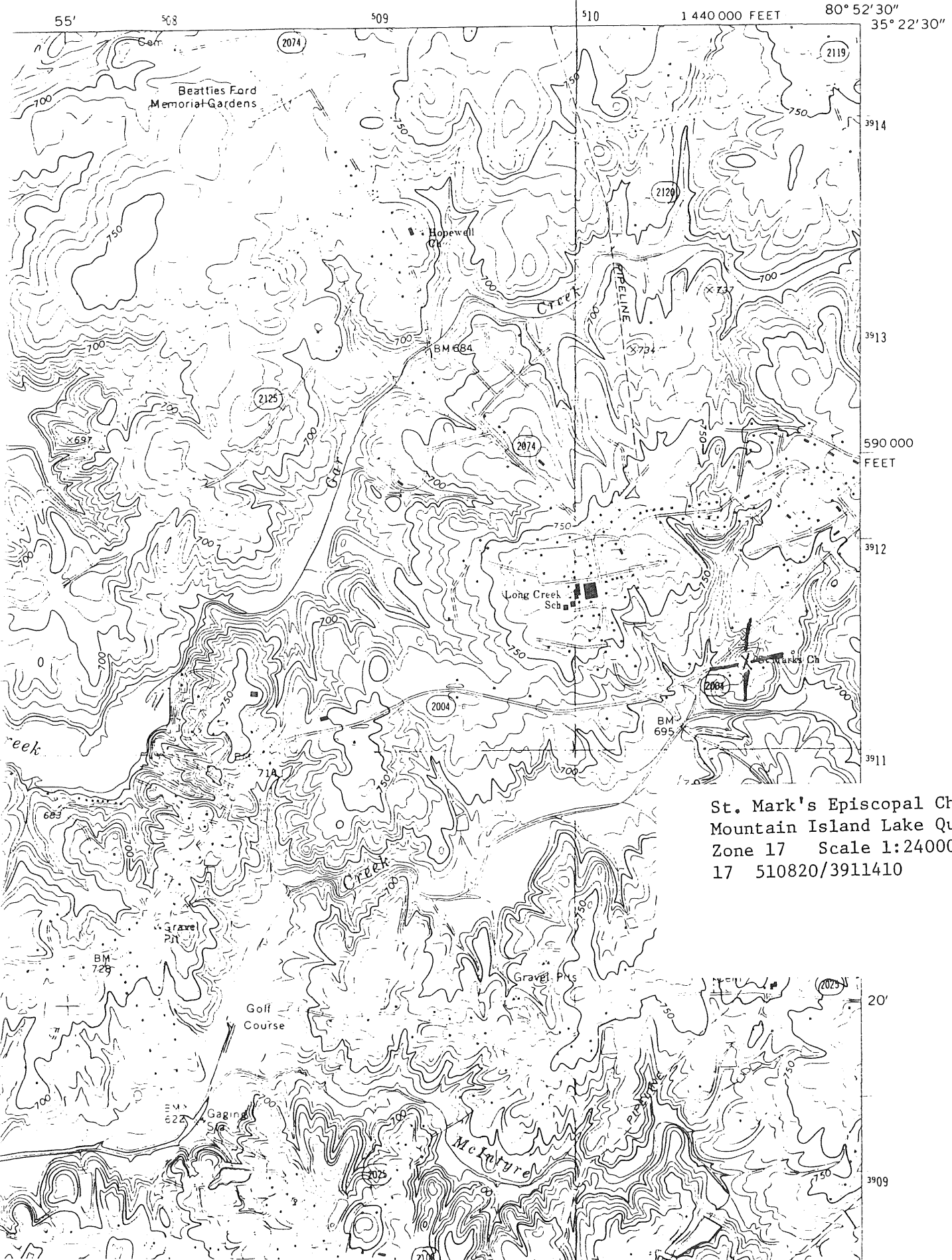
Chief of Registration



TAX LINE MAP	BOOK 25	PAGE 16
MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA		
REVISED	SCALE 1" = 400'	

MOUNTAIN ISLAND LAKE QUADRANGLE
NORTH CAROLINA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

4854 IV NE
(CORNELIUS)



St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Mountain Island Lake Quad.
Zone 17 Scale 1:24000
17 510820/3911410

